

A CHANGED POSITION.

When the second son of the Right Honourable the Earl of St. Marylebone, commonly known as the Honourable John Wentworth Richelieu Delancey, threw up his commission as a lieutenant in Her Majesty's Life Guards Blue, and vacated his apartments in the Albany, he purposed making an entirely fresh start in life. To accomplish this he not only left his native land, literally to pitch his tent some six thousand miles to the westward of the British metropolis, but also repudiated so much of his name as was not absolutely necessary for his own identification and the exigencies of business and society in the Far West.

That he was tolerably successful in his endeavours to construct his own fortune may be inferred from the fact that, some four years after the Honourable John's sudden disappearance from sundry Belgravia hallrooms and Pall Mall club-houses, plain Jack Delancey found himself the owner of a trifling matter of thirty thousand acres of rich grazing lands, over which roamed the finest and largest herd of short-horns in the Canadian North-West. Above and beyond all this, Jack Delancey was the most popular young man in the eastern part of the Territory, both among his neighbours—who were not very numerous—and with his "cowboys," who were decidedly numerous. To them all, after the Western style, he was Jack Delancey—no more and no less. But although this energetic scion of the House of St. Marylebone had discarded the "Honourable" and "Wentworth" and the "Richelieu," and had transformed "John" into "Jack," he was still a Delancey. He might have called himself Moses Smith—he might even have adopted a drawl and seasoned the same with powerful Western slang, but he would still have remained a Delancey.

For, notwithstanding that the young man affected big untanned boots, buckskin breeches, a red shirt, and a sombrero hat; though he dined at twelve o'clock with "the boys," and excused without a murmur such luxuries as table linen, cut glass, and silver-ware; though he slept in a hammock, rolled up in rather coarse blankets, and took his morning plunge in the little creek which furnished bathing facilities for all his men—he was still Jack Delancey, and it needed not the courtesy title accorded him in Burke's Peerage to proclaim this fine specimen of a sturdy Briton as the "Honourable" Jack Delancey. So, although all the stockmen and the farmers and the cowboys within fifty miles of the Delancey ranch freely addressed the wealthy young Englishman as "Jack," they cheerfully yielded him such marked deference as was never paid to any other man in the Territory, and such as Jack Delancey himself had never dreamed of demanding.

It was at the first big "round-up" after Jack's arrival in the West, and the boys were dining after a hard morning's work branding the young cattle.

"That that Delancey o' yours is blooded!" said a gaunt Canadian from a neighboring ranch. "He's got the gener'eliquid in his veins, you kin bet? He's squar," boys, an' he's fair, so he is."

"Be me faith, he is that same!" responded a son of Erin. "He's a lad after St. Patrick's own heart. Shure he's equal to none—arrah, thin, be jabers, I mane he's second to none!"

"It wur told up to the Station, when I wur over last month, as he wur a dook or a lord-mayor or sumthin' when he wur on the old sod. I'm a trifle shy of sech-like pranks as palmin' off incogniter. Looks kinder slippery, as if a fellow wur 'shamed of his own name an' previous rec'rd."

This last speaker was Calvin Larned, a ranch man of small means and smaller endeavor, who made a practice of "throwing mud" at his neighbours, and who was really only tolerated for the sake of his daughter, Metta.

"That's right, Cal! Wouldn't be you if you didn't shoot your dirty mud," retorted one of the men. "Jack Delancey's got grit and sand, anyhow, which is more than can be said of you."

"And I tell you one thing, boys," said a strapping young fellow, as the men mounted their ponies to resume their work; "Jack Delancey has got something beside pluck—he's got a great kind heart and clean hands. It doesn't make any difference whether he was a lord-mayor or a lord-chancellor over yonder—he was a gentleman, and he's that yet.—Now, boys, whoop 'em up! Stir up those cowboys lively!"

This last champion of the individual under discussion was Jack Delancey's foreman. Just who he was or where he hailed from, not even his employer knew. He had introduced himself as Spencer Knight, and claimed—although his years were less than thirty—to be an "old Westerner." He told Jack that he was originally from "the East," but had settled in the North West when he was very young, with the intention of "growing up with the country."

How Delancey became acquainted with Spencer Knight matters little. The Englishman stumbled across him in Winnipeg, where Knight—after the manner of western stockmen during the dull season—was indulging in a "toot." Delancey rendered the young fellow, who was a man after his own heart and about his own age, a valuable service, which saved Knight from the disgrace of arrest and possible imprisonment; thereby placing the Western man for ever in his debt. This was before Jack had located as a ranchman. Being a fairly good judge of human nature, and rightly estimating that Spencer Knight would not speedily forget a kindness, Delancey invited that young man to enter his service. The compact which they then made had never been regretted by either; for, after four years of hard work and constant companionship, if Knight beheld in Jack Delancey his ideal of a gentleman and a friend, Jack knew, as well as he was aware of his own existence, that with his faithful servant and friend, Spencer Knight, he might safely entrust his possessions, his life, and—his honour. And by Jack Delancey of the West, honour was as highly treasured as ever it had been by the Honourable John Wentworth Richelieu Delancey of Her Majesty's Life Guards Blue.

Now, although Cal Larned had uttered from time to time many disparaging remarks in regard to his prosperous young neighbour similar to his speech at the "round-up," dinner-party, he was in reality very anxious to secure Jack Delancey for a son-in-law. As a matter of fact it looked as if this ambi-

tion of the lazy stockman would in all probability be gratified. In older communities, Cal Larned's surliness and general aptitude for picking quarrels might have been laid to that very convenient scapegoat, dyspepsia. On the plains of Alberta that disease is unknown, and as cowboys usually "call a spade a spade," they passed upon Calvin Larned the very laconic but expressive verdict of "mean cuss." To his general meanness Larned added the vice of laziness, for which reason, undoubtedly, he was tolerably civil to Jack Delancey, and encouraged his pretty daughter Metta to accept the attentions paid her by the handsome Englishman. He figured on the probability that if Jack's business interests with those of his son-in-law by turning over his miserably small herd of cattle to Delancey, and himself roam hither and thither at his own sweet will and at Jack's expense.

How the unsavoury and unsatisfactory Calvin ever became possessed of so pretty and good a girl as Metta Larned is one of those conundrums the answers to which are locked securely in Nature's sealed books. When Jack Delancey settled in Alberta, Metta was twenty years old. She had then lived with her father on the plains for five or six years, having left her mother a thousand miles away in an Ontario graveyard. How Jack Delancey came to pay marked attentions to this girl is no conundrum at all. She was the only marriageable girl within a day's ride of the Delancey ranch. Women are scarce articles in the Territory, and unmarried women are especially few and far between. Metta Larned was unmarried, she was young, and she was pretty. Not only so; she was well informed, fairly well educated, and possessed of much good common sense. She was, from a social standpoint, the superior of all her neighbors, except Jack Delancey and, perhaps, Spencer Knight. (Knight was peculiarly reticent in regard to his antecedents, though that he had received a liberal education became constantly more apparent.)

Yes, Metta Larned was pretty; but she had not the patrician beauty of a hundred-and-one young dames whose acquaintance and favour Delancey had forsaken when he struck out for the West. Met was clever; but there were many branches of knowledge that formed the ABC of Jack's own sister's education, of which the girl was as ignorant as she was of Greek verbs and Egyptian hieroglyphics. Met dressed "nuttily," yet her neat home-made gowns would have presented a rather "dowdy" appearance alongside the most ordinary efforts of Worth or Elise. To sum up, Met Larned could thoroughly appreciate a good cook or hemstitch a handkerchief with the utmost neatness, and she could manufacture pastry which would have reflected credit upon a Parisian chef. But then—

When Jack Delancey first saw Met, on a breezy summer afternoon, with the sleeves of her simple white dress rolled up, a huge linen apron protecting her from the dusty flour, while with her chubby hands she "fixed up" a batch of bread for supper, the ex-guardian involuntarily confessed to himself that the girl looked "killing." But, later on, as he pondered over a cigar, Jack Delancey's good sense forced him to admit that it would be extremely folly in him to think of a girl like Met Larned as his future wife. It was not snobbishness, in that Delancey's early training, old associations, and family ties compelled him invariably to compare Met with his sister and his mother—always to the disadvantage of pretty Met Larned. Jack was swayed by honesty of purpose, and he resolved never to "make love" to Met; being Jack Delancey, he kept his resolution.

But, nevertheless, Jack found it very pleasant on Sunday afternoon to ride over to the Larneds' cottage, five miles away, and indulge in a chat with Metta. If he desired excuse, he found it in the paper which came to him with his mail every Saturday, and which Metta liked to read. Jack discovered a keener satisfaction in taking tea—supper, they call it in the Territory—with Metta than he had ever experienced in sipping southerly rooms. Metta's suppers were substantial affairs—delicious beefsteaks and the lightest of light hot bread, with butter that the dairy maids at Delancey Park had never surpassed. Such meals were peculiarly appreciated by Jack after a long week of tough meat, indifferent potatoes, and hardtack! And Jack reciprocated Metta's hospitality whenever he journeyed to Crowfoot—as he frequently did—by bringing the girl a new novel or "something pretty." So they became good comrades, and both enjoyed amazingly the long quiet Sunday afternoons. But their regard and esteem for each other stopped just short of love; for, after three years, Metta Larned's affection for the Englishman was no deeper than was Jack Delancey's liking for the girl.

Unfortunately, on the plains, as well as in other primitive and sparsely settled communities, actions and words frequently cause more weight than they would do in large social centres. Therefore, Calvin Larned was not alone in surmising that Jack Delancey intended, ultimately, to make Metta his wife. All "the boys" looked upon such a climax as a foregone conclusion, and even Spencer Knight shared in the general opinion. In deed, this belief alone prevented Knight himself from entering the race for Met Larned; for the foreman, who had never exchanged more than twenty sentences with Metta, loved the girl with an affection which never paused to make psychological estimate or social comparisons—a love that was only surpassed by his deep and undying loyalty to Delancey, for whose sake he kept his secret so well that not a living soul ever once dreamed of it.

Cal Larned's derogatory remarks at the "round-up" about Jack Delancey were not nearly so severe as his mental comments upon the same low subject. In his own mind he thought that the Englishman had been "foolin' around" Metta quite leniently enough. One Sabbath when Spencer Knight and most of "the boys" had gone over to Crowfoot with a couple of hundred young steers to ship by the railroad to Winnipeg, Delancey, as was his custom on Sunday mornings in summer, brought his hammock outside the long low shanty, swung it on the shady side of the building, lit his pipe, and stretched himself out to enjoy the three-weeks-old *Illustrated London News*.

"Mornin', Jack!" exclaimed a voice—the only voice whose accents usually disgusted Delancey.

"Good-morning," replied Jack lazily looking up. He noticed that his visitor was

afloat, and added: "You didn't walk over, Larned!"

"Not much, I didn't! I seen your barn door open as I come up, an' found a empty stall; so I hitched my pony an' gev him a feed o' your oats—sposethat's all right?"

"Oh, certainly, you are very welcome," said Jack, as vexed as a man could well be willing to tolerate the fellow for his daughter's sake.

"Purty dry an' dusty, Jack. Can't yer pass the bottle, me son? A small o' rye or Bourbon, or even a couple o' fingers of gin, wouldn't go bad."

"I don't like my men to use liquor, so do not use it myself, and have none on the place. You will find good spring water at the well, yonder, and plenty of milk in the cellar. That's the best I can do for you, Larned. Help yourself."

But neither milk nor water possessed any charms for Cal Larned. He threw himself full length upon the rough bench which ran along the shanty, and filled his mouth with fine cut tobacco, which he chewed very carefully for the space of five minutes. He then succeeded in drowning a grasshopper some seventeen feet away from him by a dexterous discharge of black juice, and proceeded directly to the matter which just then accounted for his presence at the Delancey Ranch. "Comin' in, yonder, in despair, threw down the paper and replied: 'Yes, I think so.'"

"Well now, Jack, how long is it since you planted yourself down here?"

"About four years."

"So? How long was you here when I gev yer a knock-down to my gal?"

"Almost a year."

"So? Well, now, I ain't much of a scholar, so ef my calculations are wrong, kindly correct me. One year from four years leaves three years. Now, on yer own show, yer've been sparkin' Met for four years. Now, Jack, when are yer goin' to marry my gal?"

Jack sat up in his hammock and dangled one leg on the ground. Slowly he repeated Larned's words: "When—am—I—going—to—marry Metta?—You are not indulging in a confoundedly poor joke, I hope, Larned?"

"Do I look as ef I wur a sky-larkin', or as ef I meant bizness? No, Jack Delancey, I'm askin' yer a squar' quesching, and ef yer're the man they say you are, yer'll gev me a straight answer. How is it?"

"My good fellow, I have never made love to your daughter for the very reason that I have never dreamt of marrying her. I have respect for Met, and esteem her very much; but I have been particularly careful to give her no false impressions. Besides, I believe Metta and I understand each other quite well. Metta?"

"You speak for yerself, Delancey. Don't I know all about her? Ain't I seen her change in the last three years until she don't think of nobody nor nothin' but you? Can't I see how she's a-growin' sick an' weary of waitin' for you to ax her?"

Jack put his other leg out of the hammock and with two of his big strides stood over his would-be father-in-law. "Tell me one thing," he said, in a tone of voice which indicated that it would not be well for his listener to tamper with him. "Tell me the truth, man, of your own child. Does Met care all that about me, and does she really believe that—that I love her?"

"She does."

"So help you God?"

"See here, Delancey," said Larned, clumsily rising to his feet; "what do you take me for? What do you suppose I care about you? You never used me half-way decent, anyhow. You an' yer keep-er-distance, lord-dook style! I ain't in love with you, nor yit yer belongings. I know I ain't a general favourite hereabouts. But Met's my gal, an' I'm her dad, an' curse me, Delancey, ef I'm a-goin' to stand by an' see her heart broke an' the best years of her young life foiled away by you nor yit no other gal rooster!"

"That will do," said Jack quietly. "I care nothing for your blustering threats. As you say, there is no love lost between you and me. But there is that which I dislike even more than Mr. Larned, and you will never find me guilty of any dishonourable conduct.—Yes, I will ride over this afternoon."

Cal Larned had acted his part well, and knew it. He was fully aware that his point was practically carried; for having succeeded in influencing a man like Jack Delancey, he knew it would be an easy matter to mould Metta to his will; so he indulged in considerable chuckling as he shuffled off to mount his pony and ride home.

A few days later, Spencer Knight returned. In the evening, he and Delancey strolled down to the creek to smoke an after-supper pipe. "Spence," said Jack, "I am going to marry Metta Larned."

"Yes," responded the other; "we all thought it would come to that. I hope you will both be very happy, Delancey."

Curiously enough, each of the men, for the first time in the course of their acquaintance, remarked a strange glumness in the other. They not only remarked it, but both remembered it very vividly. There was no gladness about Delancey's announcement, and Knight's congratulatory reply had a counterfeit ring about it.

"Next Monday," said Jack after a pause, "I shall start for home to make the folks life. You will stay and take care of things for me while I am gone, won't you, Spence? I shall not be away more than a couple of months, and during that time I should like you to have the carpenters over from Crowfoot and run up a comfortable cottage over yonder by the poplars. Consult Metta as much as possible."

tenant sauntered towards the creek. "Let us talk of other matters to-night."

As a matter of fact, they said nothing at all for almost half an hour. Then Delancey spoke: "How is Metta? I have heard her not to write, as I was so uncertain about starting. How is she?"

"Metta is well, very well."

"Silence again, broken this time by Knight: 'Delancey?' Both men paused in their walk, and Jack puffed violently at his pipe. 'You picked me up a stranger, and treated me like the 'white man' that you are. You had faith in my manhood and you have trusted me implicitly. Have I justified your confidence?'

"You have, Spence—a thousand times over, boy. Here is my hand on it."

"Thanks, Delancey. Now, trust me a little more, and believe that I would not pry into being meddlesome, or to wound you. May I go ahead?"

"Surely. Let us sit on this boulder."

"Delancey, you just asked about Metta. You do not love that girl. I knew it the night that we were last on this spot, when you told me of your engagement to her. You will never be really happy with Metta for your wife."

"Stop," said Jack, with a faint smile. "This question is undebatable. I have asked Metta to marry me, and it is utterly impossible to discuss the matter."

"But," persisted Knight, "you love with all your heart and soul another woman. You cannot deny that—you do not desire to deny it. You love, as you can never hope to love Metta, my sister Florence."

"Nonsense, Spence! Lady Florence Knight, your sister?"

"The very same. You see, my dear fellow, I too am an 'honourable.' It was a rather shabby trick on your part, Delancey, to go over there and lose your heart to my sister, while you kept me all these months waiting to become reconciled to my father.—But, to return to our subject. You not only fell desperately in love with Flo, but you have stolen the poor girl's heart away from her."

"Indeed, Spence, I have been strictly honourable in this matter. While at home, I made no secret of my engagement, and studiously avoided anything like a flirtation with Lady Florence. We were thrown much together, and I confess—Well, that makes no difference; I am here to keep my word with Metta."

"Admit, Delancey," said Knight, rather comically, "that in the presence of my sister you tried your best to behave like a sphinx; but—I have it on the authority of my married sister—your attempt was a signal failure: while, as for Florence, she has made a clean confession to her sister.—Now, are you going to make Flo miserable as well as yourself?"

"I am grieved to learn," muttered Jack, "that I have unintentionally caused your sister temporary distress. But as for myself—I think a fellow need not feel particularly miserable in living up to his word.—No; I shall marry Metta Larned."

"Wait a while," continued Knight, laying his hand upon his friend's shoulder. "Metta Larned does not love you! What do you say to that?"

"Possibly so. But how do you know that to be the case?"

"Because—why—er (you haven't a pistol about you, Delancey)—Well, the fact is that Met loves me, and I love her; and if you do not seriously object, we should both of us like to release you from your engagement.—Yes," he went on, "I suppose you ought to demand an explanation and satisfaction from me for robbing you of your affianced bride. But I did not begin the robbery until I was tolerably sure that I should not be striking you very hard. As I said, I surmised a good deal more before you started for home. A month ago, Cal Larned died—gored by a young bull—and before his death, he confessed to me that he had terrorized Met and played a 'bluff game' with you.—You are not very angry, are you, Delancey?"

Jack certainly did not look very angry, and he grasped his friend's hand and shook it with remarkable vigour.

The Honourable Spencer Knight is still known as Spence Knight on the Delancey ranch, of which he is sole proprietor; but Jack Delancey of Alberta is no more, his friends having re-christened that gentleman with his old name when he settled down to the pleasant life of an English country Squire.

Size and Longevity.

Although there is some relation between size and longevity, the duration of the period of growth and length of life being, speaking generally, longest in the largest animals, there is no fixed relation between the two. The largest organisms live the longest, some trees reaching an age of 6,000 years, and some animals, as whales, several centuries. And, after maturity is reached, larger animals require longer time than smaller animals to secure the preservation of the species.

The explanation of this, as pointed out by both Leuckart and Herbert Spencer, is that "the absorbing surface of an animal only increases as the square of its length, while its size increases as the cube; and it therefore follows that the longer an animal becomes the greater will be the difficulty experienced in assimilating any nourishment over and above that which it requires for its own needs, and therefore the more slowly will it reproduce itself." We, however, find corresponding duration of life among animals of very different size. For example, the toad and the cat lives as long as the horse, the crayfish as long as the pig and the pike and carp as long as the elephant. In an interesting appendix, from which these and the following facts are quoted, Dr. Weissmann cites the case of a sea anemone which lived not less than sixty-six years. It was placed by Sir John Dalzell in a small glass jar in the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens in 1828, being then, as companions with other individuals reared from the egg period, fully seven years old. It died a natural death in 1887.—*Longman's Magazine*.

If national debts mean national wealth, as Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr. D'Israeli) once said, then Russia must be one of the richest countries on earth. Already this year British capitalists have lent the czar's government seventy-one million pounds. Russia has besides £329,581,000 outstanding in sterling bonds, largely held in England. There is about £140,000 in rouble bonds outstanding, and recently issued rail road bonds aggregating some £40,000,000. Besides all this the government has out more than £200,000,000 in paper money. On top of all this the public expenses are always greater than the revenue.

An Engineering Triumph.

On Tuesday, March 4th, with a great flourish of trumpets, the Prince of Wales formally opened the new Frith-of-Forth bridge, which has been styled the King of bridges. It is big enough to be added to the wonders of the world. It far surpasses not only in utility but in its structure as an engineering feat the Eiffel tower. The calculations have been made that one of the three cantilevers, with its connecting girders, if set up lengthways on end, would be very nearly the same height as the Paris tower. The latter contains only 7,500 tons of iron, while the Frith bridge has absorbed over 50,000 tons of the finest steel that could be procured. It was begun in 1883, and has taken about seven years to complete. The bridge proper is just over a mile in length, but there are viaducts on each end connecting it with the high ground, and these together add half a mile more to the length of the work. The height of the spans above the waters is 150 feet, allowing for the passage of the largest vessels. To attain this height, the cantilevers tower high above, and they required an elevation as high as St. Paul's cathedral. A comparison between the Frith and other great bridges of the world is as follows:

Bridge	Length, feet	Greatest span, feet
Forth bridge	8,091	1,710
Tay bridge	10,780	245
Niagara bridge	818	808
Landore bridge	1,760	110
Crumlin bridge	1,800	150
Britannia bridge	1,511	460
Brooklyn bridge	5,862	1,600

The two great arch spans of the Frith bridge, 1,710 feet each, are beyond any span before attempted. Each is 110 feet wider than the central span of the Brooklyn bridge. It has cost, or it was estimated to cost, \$10,000,000 in money. In human life, up to September, 1888, including five drowning cases, the fatal accidents in connection with its construction amounted to 23, while the total number of accidents non-fatal up to the same time was 543. An army of workmen, numbering at times as many as 4,500, have been engaged most of the seven years in building the gigantic structure.

The Armies of Europe.

The Almanack de Gotha of 1890 contains a statement of the military strength of the various countries of Europe. As the editors of this annual are especially careful in gathering facts of this class, and have exceptional means of information, their statements are considered as almost official. From these it appears that on a peace footing the military strength of France is, at the present time, greater by nearly a hundred thousand men than that of Germany, and very nearly, if not quite, as great as the actual strength of Russia. Taking Russia and France in combination, and putting their armies on a war footing, the numerical force of these two allies would be greater than that which Germany, Austria and Italy could by combination put in the field. The central powers of Europe would have the advantage of position, and it is probable would have the advantage of direction; that is, the control of military movements would undoubtedly be given to Germany, while the French and Russian would not only be compelled to act separately, but neither would consent to take a position in the matter of direction subordinate to the other. Such a great war may be improbable, but in view of a number of grave uncertainties, it may break out on these lines before the present year is over.

A Dry Dock at Gibraltar.

England's proposal to establish a dry dock at Gibraltar is not viewed with favor by the authorities at Madrid. In the chamber of deputies the other day Senor Moya, Republican, supported the demand hitherto made that the government should give the House explicit information in regard to the projected new dock which it is reported the English Government is to build at Gibraltar. The minister of foreign affairs replied that what it was proposed to build was a dry dock, and that it was to be constructed within the port of Gibraltar, and consequently upon British territory. Not quite assured by this explanation of the pacific intentions of the old "lion," and regarding the movement as a menace to their safety, several speakers urged the government to adopt precautionary measures, and strengthen the fortifications at Tarifa and Ceuta. Of course no one will say them nay in the matter of improving their defenses; still they need not give themselves any great concern or quake with fear, for it is not the habit of this particular lion to provoke an unjust quarrel with any other nation. Let Spain act as becometh a civilized nation and she need not fear though Britain establish a dozen dock-yards at the straits.

The deceased wife's sister bill in the English parliament is what in this country would be irreverently called, a "chestnut." It has appeared periodically for many years and usually, we believe, passes the Commons but runs aground in the house of lords, where conservative and ecclesiastical influences are too strong for it. A despatch from London says that the promoters of the bill hold that they are pledged not to agree to its extension to cases of marriage with a deceased husband's brother. That is a distinction much like that between tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum. If one is right there appears no earthly reason why the other shouldn't be, although there is this much to be said—that it is sometimes an extremely dangerous thing to weaken the bond of relationship between relatives.

It is not likely that Senator Macdonald, of B. C., will purane his Mormon bill further, now that Sir John Thompson's criminal bill covers essentially the same ground as the other. That part of the minister of Justice's bill relating to the question of plural marriages makes it a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for two years or fine of \$500, or both, to practice by the rites or ceremonies of any denomination or what are commonly known among Mormons as spiritual or plural marriages. This penalty also includes any one who celebrates, is a party to, or assists in any such rite or ceremony which purports to make binding or to sanction any of such sexual relationships, procures, enforces or is a party to the compliance with any such form, rule or custom which so purports, or procures or enforces the execution of any such form of contract which so purports, or the giving of any such consent in all such cases. The lawful husband or wife of the defendant shall be a competent but not a compellable witness for or against the defendant.